

“TO GOD BE THE GLORY”

Acts 12:18-25

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INTRODUCTION

God had just miraculously delivered Peter from prison; that was good for Christians, but *very bad* for Herod Agrippa I. It made his leadership look incompetent. No leader wants to appear that way! In the text before us, Herod takes action in order to bolster his self-confidence.

He was a very proud man. What man isn't? However, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Once again, God has a plan. He will see to it that the Gospel ministry progresses, and at the same time He will humble human pride.

We must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God in order that He might exalt us.
(James 5:10).

I. THE PRIDE OF HEROD (18-23)

A. His Execution of the Soldiers (18-19)

- When day came, “*there was no small stir among the soldiers* concerning Peter’s disappearance from prison!
- This had to have been “an inside job.”
- Herod made an unsuccessful search for Peter.
- He then examined the guards.
- Since they allowed a “capital prisoner” to escape, they received “capital punishment.”

This entire experience was very humiliating for Herod; therefore he took a trip to Caesarea—the capital of the Roman province of Judea. Reasons?

- 1) Embarrassment over Peter
- 2) Problem with Tyre and Sidon
- 3) “Games” for Claudius. The Jewish historian, Josephus, discusses this incident and suggests that Herod was conducting games and invited royal visitors and many other guests from various provinces in order to honor the emperor—maybe on his birthday.

B. His Exaltation by the People (20-23)

1. Heated anger with the people of Tyre and Sidon—Phoenician cities.

- The term means “to wage war fiercely”—though literal war was impossible here since these cities were in another Roman province.
 - Likely due to commercial interests.
 - He had likely put an “economic embargo” of foodstuffs on these cities due to his anger. Compare I K. 5:9; 9:11-13; similar economic arrangements in the days of Solomon.
2. The Bribery of Blastus
- They came to the festive occasion “with one accord”.
 - They “won over”—bribed—Blastus, keeper of the king’s bedchamber who would have access to the king.
 - They “sued for peace” since their country was dependent upon Judea for food supplies.
3. Harangue by Herod (21)
- “Appointed day”—possibly the birthday of the emperor?
 - Put on his finest royal apparel.
 - Sat on his judgment seat—*Bema*. May have been his royal seat in the theater where he watched the games and made speeches.
 - Began delivering an address.
 - The commentary of Josephus—*The rays of the sun shone on his brilliant apparel and the large crowd in the open amphitheater were excited as he began to speak. **The garment was woven completely of silver.***
4. Praise by Pagans (22)
- “The voice of a god and not of a man.”
 - He would have been surrounded by a body of courtiers and flatterers.
 - Since emperor worship was common, Herod was likely flattered by this praise, and people would not think it terribly uncommon or inappropriate.
 - Yet, later the subjects turned on him and rioted and heaped insults on his name and his children..
 - Such is the value of human flattery
- C. His Judgment by God (23)
1. An “angel of the Lord” killed him; could this be the same angel that had delivered Peter? The word “struck” is the same here as in v. 7.
He was struck for taking glory to himself instead of giving glory to God.
 - Compare the behavior of Peter in Acts 10:26.
 - Compare Paul’s response to “worship” in Acts 14:14.
 2. He was “eaten by worms and died.

- We cannot be certain of the exact condition of his morbid death.
 - Josephus says that he lingered 5 days before dying.
 - It is possible that a cyst containing tape worms ruptured.
 - What a way to go!
3. **What justice to the persecutor!** Josephus comments on a strange owl that had been seen by Herod earlier when he had been imprisoned by Tiberius, and now it appeared again in this circumstance as an omen of his death.
- Phil. 1:28—destruction for persecutors, but salvation for believers.
 - II Thes. 1:6-7: God justly repays affliction to those who afflict believers.
 - I Pet. 2:12—Slanderers of believers will “glorify” God in the day of judgment.
 - Compare Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 4:30—**Pride before a fall; struck at the zenith of his glory.** He ends up giving glory to God in v. 37.

Yes, God rewarded Herod’s pride and gave him his just punishment. However, the Gospel continued to make progress (24-25)

II. THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL (24-25)

A. Growth of “the word of the Lord (See 6:7; 19:20)

- Saving of souls.
- Growth of believers.
- **Such were the results of the death of James and of Peter’s imprisonment. The church had not been hurt at all.**
- Contrast the death of the persecutor and the growth of the word.

B. Preparation for Expansion (25)

1. Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem—after fulfilling their mission of charity.
2. They took along with them John Mark—alluding to the events of chapter 13. They likely already had in mind missionary travels.

CONCLUSION

Of what value is a man’s pretentiousness?

Have you humbled yourself before God? He will exalt you.

Has He been glorified in your life?

Forget pride and spread the gospel!